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Denise Conway

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KENYON COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Stories of Knox County

Denise Conway
Interviewed by
Maria Brescia-Weiler and Jordan Guy-Mozenter
On
February 23, 2017

Kenyon College

Oral History Project
Stories of Knox County

Interviewee: Denise Conway
Interviewer: Maria Brescia-Weiler and Jordan Guy-Mozenter
February 23, 2017

Maria Brescia-Weiler: Ok so this is Maria Brescia-Weiler with the Stories of Knox County Project interviewing Denise--what's your last name?

Denise Conway: Conway.

MBW: Conway, on her experiences with life in Knox County. Today's date is February 23rd, 2017 and we're speaking at Foster's Pharmacy Eastside location. Um, thank you for your willingness to participate. Could you please state your full name and birthday?

DC: Denise Conway. 8/31/76.

MBW: So how long have you lived in Knox County?

DC: So, I've been born and raised in Knox County. Um, I actually met my husband, uh, we met on a blind date, he was born and raised in Knox County also, so we went to college, came back got married and we're raising our family here, in Mount Vernon.

MBW: Um, where'd you go to college?

DC: We both went to Ohio Northern University, obviously I went to the college of pharmacy. He's an engineer he graduated from the college of engineering, and is manager of technical services, field service with Ariel Corporation.

MBW: How long has your family been here?

DC: My family has been here, gosh, back to, you know--I did a family history on both of my families--we've been planted here since like the 1800s. Both sides of my family--so my mom and my dad, born and raised in Knox County, um Fredericktown area and then Marengo area, and they have raised, you know, all of their families and we've all lived here. Now I have two older sisters, um, they don't live in Knox County, I'm the only one that came back home (Laughter) But that's alright. That's alright.

MBW: Where are they now?

DC: So, I have one sister that lives in New Albany and one that lives in Cincinnati. And then my husband has a brother who lives in Cleveland.

MBW: So have you ever considered living anywhere else?

DC: You know, I don't think either of us really have. So when we were looking at colleges--I'm a year older--so I graduated high school a year before he did so I was looking at colleges, found Ohio Northern University, which is practically like a Kenyon College. Built into a Gambier, um, Ohio Northern was built into a very small town called Aida, we had two traffic lights, we had one, maybe two bars, um, we had a Hardee's, that was our fast food restaurant, and we had a gas station. And we had a Subway. So, that, when I walked on campus, I felt like I was at home. I was far enough away from home where I could come home if I got homesick--and I certainly did, you know, I came home every weekend and worked, cause I was homesick--but I was just far enough away that I could get a little bit of independence and Mom and Dad weren't like, you know, giving me unannounced visits. Um, so, loved the hometown feeling, and then obviously academically, loved that too. Um...oops did I mess that up? I'm sorry.

MBW: You're good. So why would you never consider living anywhere else?

D: Oh yeah that--ok, I didn't get to that answer, um, why would I never--I guess I would never consider it because I love feeling attached to the community. And so, um, cause I'm very much a loving person, I'm a hugger, I didn't hug all of you but I really wanted to because I'm, I just, i like to feel attachment with people. And so, I could feel that in Ada, at Ohio Northern um I felt very comfortable with the close knit family. Why I would probably not go to a larger city is maybe I'd feel disconnected or maybe not so much of a success or, um, I think I just needed to go back to that familiar area that made me successful. How can I give back to the area that has allowed me to grow, and then how can I give back to them? So the one thing that really comes to mind with why I would've never pictured myself anywhere else is about, I would say four or five years ago the Mount Vernon City Schools, they had a huge levy and it was a do or die levy, like there were gonna be major cuts and there were all kinds of things that we thought may happen. Now having children in school, I was getting worried, but I had younger kids so they weren't gonna be impacted as much as the older children and high schoolers. And I sat here and as a business owner I'm like, what can I do? How can we motivate the community because really education is like the framework to a really solid community, you gotta have a strong school system to also have a strong community so, um, I emailed a ton of people that I knew, from young to old, who have lived in the community, went away, educated, came back, found their way back here--whether it was one, two, ten, twenty years later and said, I wanna interview you with the help of a friend, Matt Star, he um videotaped everyone. I said we need to do this little, it was almost like a Tedtalks, now it would be a Tedtalks but it was that was not even in existence

back then, but we interviewed these people to say, Why should our community support the school levee? What brought you back to Mount Vernon after so long? And so we interviewed probably ten or fifteen people, the mayor sat down with us, because our mayors from Danville, you know he sat down and we asked him really poignant questions, to where, you know I got interviewed and I was a blubbery mess, I just cried and so then we put, we just put it out on social media, Facebook, to let people see, hey this is why we're doing this, this is why a school levee is so important, um, to let people to know there are success stories and there are people that wanna come back to Mount Vernon to keep making it great, or Fredericktown, or Danville, or Gambier, to keep making it great, because it allowed us to grow, experience and come back and bring our experiences there. Thankfully, I don't know whether our idea worked but we had a successful passing levee. So I think, I don't know whether I would have had those opportunities to do that if I lived somewhere big. I don't think I'd be able to find my way into volunteerisms, I feel like I might get lost because I'm really not that type of, like, I have a real hard time kind of making friends or introducing myself to complete strangers, um, at some points I'm an introvert, but if I get to know you, like now, I'll chat for hours.

MBW: So, did you go to the same schools that your kids go to now?

DC: So, elementary school I did not—I grew up in the north end of town, so I went to Dan Emmett Elementary in the north end of town. North end of town, lots of, we lived um, tons, tons of neighborhood kids, we rode our bikes, we walked to and from school. My husband and I now live out in the country, out in Gambier so our children go to Wiggin Street. And so what's been so fun is, both Kevin and I grew up in Mount Vernon, we were involved in Kenyon, yeah, we knew about Kenyon. We took Kenyon for granted, honestly, we took Gambier for granted. We hung out in Gambier all the time as we grew up in middle school and high school, um and we loved Kenyon for just bein this, eh, it's Gambier, it's, you know, not everyone has the experience of having a Kenyon College within five minutes of them. And so, now living out in Gambier, in the country, I value that so much more and I'm so thankful that our children go to Wiggin Street because they have opportunities there that, unfortunately some of the other schools in Mount Vernon don't have. Like, all the volunteerism that all of you Kenyon students do, that is huge, it just speaks abunds about how it collaborates so well with Kenyon, so that has been really really cool. And Kevin and I are really thankful that we've located ourselves where we have in allowing our kids to experience Wiggin Street, and in being in Gambier. They just think it's just so cool to just be able to walk through Gambier, and you know, I took that for granted growing up. Um, there was, when we were in high school we used to all hang out in Peirce Hall—in Peirce? Yes, that's your, see I am so not even familiar with some of the terminology, Peirce is your dining hall right? So in the lower level, of the dining hall there's a pub there now right?

Clara Roman-Odio: Yes.

DC: Ok, there used to be like a candy shop, billiards room, restaurant, do you remember that?

CRO: Mhmm.

DC: Why can't I remember what it was called? Um, I don't remember, but anyway, that was our gathering point in high school. We would go to basketball games and then we would go there and just hang out, order pizza, drink pop, they had bulk candy that we would buy. Those are the things I remember about Kenyon.

MBW: How old are your kids?

DC: Our daughter is twelve, she's a sixth grader, and um our son is nine, soon to be ten—he would be correcting me in a couple weeks—and he's a fourth grader at Wiggin Street.

MBW: Um, so, I guess, other than living in Gambier, do you think that there are ways that your children's growing up experience in this area is different than yours?

DC: Definitely. Um, it's different mainly because I grew up in a neighborhood full of homes, and we rode our bikes freely, we walked everywhere freely, we would play till sundown, till we heard this dinner bell go off and we knew that it was Denise's dinner bell and I had to run home and I don't know what everyone else did. Um, but now we live in the country, we have five acres, we don't have neighbors for our children. We feel bad, they don't really care. They don't know what it's like to live in a neighborhood, to have friends, so we feel bad about that. Um, they love to be able to just walk outside and have that freedom of just going wherever they wanna go. But we also want, we want them to have neighborhood friends, so to say, so they're learning how to maybe ride their bike down the road to a friends house, there are some children that live in the neighborhood. So that's been different. Now social media has really put a spin on raising children (laugh). Um, you know, we didn't have any of those things as my husband and I grew up, or as we lived in Mount Vernon, um so it was, um, writing a note on a piece of paper, you know like, and passing that to your friend, now it's texting and Instagram and, you know, my husband and I had this plan, our parenting plan was our children were not gonna have any iPhones until they were sixteen, because then they were gonna have drivers license and then we did need to keep track of them, because other than that they were either gonna be other our wing or another parent's wing or grandma and grandpa. Well, that demise came to an end with a child hitting middle school, and we needed to communicate with her and we realized, ok, maybe we did need to loosen our hold a little bit with her. So, now parenting is completely different because now we have this third element of this social media kind of molding her and controlling her and um not a, kind of combatting against our parenting style. So we're having—and she's wonderful, she could care less about having this phone, which has been a miracle, we love it. Her friends actually get mad at her for not responding to their text messages because she doesn't pay

attention to it, so she's kind of gone in the other direction. But I think it's been two different, yes, completely two different worlds of childhood growing up, um, but we're also bringing in what we were taught by both of our parents. We have a very similar discipline style, with the way we were raised, because we look back on, did we appreciate what Mom and Dad did to us then, and should we continue that now and kind of set the precedent in parenting? And we are, um, and there are somethings that we loosened the strings on that grandma and grandpa are like (gasp), you know, "What? You leave her home alone and she's twelve years old?" "It's ok, it's ok." You know, thinks like that, but there, the one thing that we're working on with them is being very conscientious of your surroundings, because back when we grew up every door in the school was unlocked. You could go and come from high school as you pleased. That doesn't happen any more, every door is locked, um, our children can only enter from one door, and so now when they leave school, we just, we are coaching them—I don't wanna terrify them, but I'm coaching them to just pay attention, you know. Yes, we want to believe and hope that everyone is kind and wonderful and not negative in any way but um, making them realize that there are some, some people out there that could be mean and evil, so that's what we're working on right now.

MBW: So with the like heightened security, sort of more doors being locked, do you think that that's like a necessary—do you think the community is less safe than it was when you grew up?

DC: Um, no, I don't think it's less safe. Criminals have definitely gotten smarter, technology has definitely allowed them to get smarter, um, we have had to change the way we create the safety now, I think, and not be so carefree about it. You know, back then we would leave our cars unlocked and parked outside, you know those little things that we took for granted. Yeah, you gotta do it now. You gotta lock your car, you gotta lock all your doors in your house, you gotta lock all your doors in the school. It's a different type of safety, yeah.

MBW: Um, so how long has your family owned this business?

DC: So, this business that we're sitting in right now—Foster's East Side Pharmacy—is, um, owned by myself and two other business partners, um and we've had this business for, it'll be eleven years in May. We share the same name as all the Foster's, so we have three Foster's Pharmacies. The weird thing about it is all three of these Foster's Pharmacies have three different groups of owners, ok, but we all came from the same store, which would be our Foster's on West High Street. So we all kind of grew up there. That's where I started working there in 1995 as a sales clerk. Before we were at the location that we're at now we were on the square. And I started as a sales clerk, working through college—through high school and through college. Then, just worked my way up, then I became a technician, which is like the pharmacist's right hand gal, you know, or man, or whatever the situation may be, um, and you have to be certified for that, and I did that through college. And then you know going to pharmacy school and becoming certified as a pharmacist, and then this opportunity of opening this store and owning

this came to myself and my other two business partners in about 2004. The hospital was wanting to build this building and, um, they came to current owners, or, excuse me, they came to the owners at that time, of the downtown Foster's, and said, "Do you wanna open a third store?" And at that time those two owners were, they were embarking on retirement and they were like, "Ehh, no, but we have our three staff pharmacists who we think might." And that was myself, and my other two partners. And so, we did. We came together and we formed our business group and we have this store. Um, so, this is a, kind of a branch of from our tree trunk Foster's Pharmacy downtown that's been in business for over sixty years. And then this location has been eleven, almost eleven, and then we have a store in Centerburg.

MBW: So who are your customers, like what's your customer base?

DC: Our customer base is actually, um, I would say a lot of older patients, and then probably like the younger family with children. The middle of the range we probably don't have as many mid-age, fifty, sixty, patients. It kind of mimics what's in the building here, so we have family practice, I mean there's all kind of specialties in this building so it's a whole, it's a whole mesh of things. We have surgeons, we have general surgery, we have OBGYN, we have orthopedic surgery, we have ENT, cardiology. But, the majority of the people that we see probably are in the older age geriatric realm.

MBW: What would you say your relationship is, do you feel like you have a strong relationship with your customers? Do you like see the same people a lot?

DC: Oh yeah, I have to admit, yeah, I think I do have a strong relationship with them, um, only because they, I see them a lot, yes, a lot, we talk to them a lot on the phone and they will come to us, and not just me but my whole staff because this staff has been here for the longevity also, the eleven-ish years, they will come to us with off the wall things, not necessarily medication related items, but like, my cell phone doesn't work, and they'll come and they'll think of us, like, "Can you fix this?" "Well yes, we'll attempt to," you know. Just weird things, but they look to us as family and that's what, that's one of my primary goals, is, we wanna take care of you, we wanna love you, we wanna make you healthy and you are our family. So, I do, I try to make it a priority, we all do, to know them by their names, to call them by their names. We're huggy people, we hug everyone.

MBW: So do you, have your customers, or like the way that you run the business changed over the past eleven years at all?

DC: Yeah, in this world of pharmacy because our business is kinda run by health insurance companies, and so yeah some people do have to come and go because sometimes the insurance companies, not sometimes, the whole time, the insurance companies kind of run the show. And

so they will tell the patients, well, that's not a preferred pharmacy any more this one is, or, your co-pay is gonna be higher if you go to Foster's than if you go someplace else, you know, so unfortunately yes, they do come and go. That has been very minimal. We have been able to keep things growing, you know, there has been growth and there has been shrink, and that happens each year, but I think for the large part of it we've seen our patient base stay pretty consistent. And it breaks our heart to see them go because we build a relationship with them, um, and then when we don't see them as often it makes us sad. But, yeah, I think we're pretty solid, and we wanna keep it that way.

MBW: What would you say is the biggest challenge to running a business like this?

DC: Personally my biggest challenge is I'm really, I always thought I wanted to own Foster's, you know that was a goal, but never knew it was gonna happen as quickly as it did. Graduating in 2000 from pharmacy school and then being approached to own a business in 2004 was, "Oh boy, I didn't take any, I took one business class, I got a lot to learn" (Laughter) So, because I was concentrating on being a pharmacist and yeah, down the road I'll learn about how to own the business as I gain experience, not thinking it would be four years of the cuff. So, I've definitely, um, it's taken me a long time to learn about the business, or to learn just about financial statements and everything that goes into it, and how to keep track of the finances and, yeah, there were a lot of things that I missed out on that I just kind of learned on the run. So, the most challenging thing is time management for me. Owning a business and wanting to also be a mom and a wife. Like for example, I worked till eight o'clock, eight thirty last night, I came in at eight forty-five, it's a long day. And that happens frequently, but that's what you have to do, you know, because I'm in this position, I'm ok with it. I come home and my kids are ready to hug me, how was your—they literally are like, "How was your day?" They had a plate of food ready for me. So that support at home helps so much. But time management is really the hardest part, because I don't wanna gyp anyone, and I don't wanna get angry because I've got this list back here growing, but I have patients that need me to check their prescriptions and talk to them and take care of their problems, and then I have my staff that I need to be nice and cordial and not bite anyone's head off just because, you know, I've got things brewing in my head, so that's been rough. And I'm still learning how to handle it eleven years later. (Laughter)

MBW: You talked about your family as a support—you mentioned that your parents are, are they still in the area?

DC: Yeah, my parents are still in the area, my husband's parents are still in the area. They're all retired, and so, quite honestly my husband and I would not be able to do what we do at a full time schedule as what we do if we did not have four grandparents who were completely retired and willing to literally raise our children from infancy to now. Because they did. It was amazing, we had, our children were both really very unexpected, not planned, um so that kind of threw a

hitch into things. I got pregnant with our son a couple months into opening this business—oops! Yeah, and to tell your business partners, “I’m pregnant, and I’m gonna be off for a little while in about nine months, oh no, sorry about that.” So after our second son my mom had said to me, she’s like, “I don’t know whether I can raise anymore children” (Laughter) Because they were, they all four put themselves out there to take our young children in infancy so we could work full time jobs, and I said, “I know, I hear ya, I’m done, one of each—we’re good, you know, I’m happy.” So our parents have been blessings, huge blessings to us, because they also have a great relationship with their grandchildren to, and that’s been really really cool to see happen too. So, we, yes, my dad actually delivers for us. We have free delivery at this location also—so all three of our locations have free delivery, within Mount Vernon, but when I opened this business I was like, “Dad, you’re retired now, you wanna do something?” And he’s like, “You want me to deliver?” “Yeah” (Laughter). So he delivers Monday through Friday for me. We deliver to Kenyon, we work with the health center, so we make a trip to Gambier everyday with prescriptions for Kenyon students, or anyone that lives in the village of Gambier, we’ve got other patients there. And so, it’s been fun and challenging and um, I don’t know what else to say, to be able to work with your dad every day, like, not very many people can say that they work with their dad Monday through Friday, it’s, it’s been, it’s pretty fun.

MBW: So what do you think are like the core values that your parents instilled in you?

DC: Oh, golly. Lemme think, that’s a really good question. What did my parents instill in me? Well, the first one was to be on time, and I still haven’t captured that one, sorry Mom and Dad (Laughter). The second one was to, probably to be as active as I can in getting involved in things. So, I was always getting involved in activities or programs or whatever and they never, um, they always enabled that—go do it, go get active, go volunteer, whatever. So that was wonderful. And then, discipline. They were very strong discipliners, yeah. And I had fun hanging out with them like, really, I would hang out with them on Friday and Saturday nights, even in high school, you know, I would, they and their friends, they were fun to hang out with. So I would hang out with them, um, but they were also very disciplined. You know I, if there was a curfew, if it was a minute I was scared to death if I walked in at twelve-oh-one cause I knew I would have two sets of eyes looking at me and there better be a good reason. So that discipline has definitely carried through.

MBW: So what are some ways that you are active now in the community?

DC: So, one of my biggest things that I’m really active in, and have been for about three or four years now, is the Knox Substance Abuse Action Team. So we are a huge drug task force action team, and probably shouldn’t use drug task force, that’s an old term now, but we are comprised of many members of the community of Knox County working on combating our issue of addiction. Now this addiction could be to smoking, to alcohol, to marijuana, to drugs, both illicit

and opiate drugs. So, we are comprised of lots of people, whether it's non-profit organizations, treatment recovery, medical, um, who else? Faith based organizations. And so we have broken ourselves down into some subcommittees and we are trying to help bring the community together along with initiatives that are trying to combat this issue because you can't do it on your own. As a community we have got to realize that this is a huge issue, and it's not just an addiction issue but then that addiction leads to a lifestyle issue, and then that leads into criminal activity, that leads to decreased work employment, and that leads to a decline in our community as a whole. And so then this beautiful community that raised me, that I was so, I'm so passionate about coming back to living to, doesn't look as pretty to other people who want to move into the area. So, I'm a chair person for the community committee, so why we're trying to, what we do is we're kind of educating the community—What are we? What is this task force? What is our purpose? And how can we bring everyone together, and all these different initiatives and ideas, and bring everyone together and really work and stimulate and help our fellow, and um, I was just at a meeting this morning were someone referred to anyone whose struggling as a neighbor, and they are literally our neighbors. Because addiction can happen to anyone, anywhere, of any lifestyle, of anything. It has, it is faceless, and so we, um, it's a huge undertaking and one of our biggest things that my committee's doing right now is we're creating this resource booklet, like I talked about, and it's gonna be about a fifty page resource booklet that will be free to anyone who needs it. And there will be avenues where we'll be able to give it out more frequently, like through law enforcement and United Way and the health department, but it's just gonna be a piece of information, hopefully the most invaluable information someone will have, to help them or their loved ones or their neighbor, who might be struggling with something to get them started and to a path of rehabilitation. And I'm passionate about that not just because of what I see, because I have seen people who have gone from a normal lifestyle, and then they've had maybe an injury or something has happened in their life, depression, and I've seen them decline and then I've seen the addiction take over. And it, it breaks my heart. And so, I'm at that position, I think I'm at that place where I can be very helpful, I'll say helpful, so I am one that can't, can't nor doesn't want to say no to people, and I want to kind of lead and create excitement and try to draw people in, um, to make and continue to make this place so cool. I mean, you look at downtown, oh my gosh, I'm so excited with what's happening in downtown Mount Vernon. To see what it was like when I was a little girl, we had, I would go shop in downtown Mount Vernon, that's where I bought my clothes, that's where we bought jewelry, and then those things faded away. And now those things are coming back and that is what's so cool—to see The Alcove come back to life, and recreate itself, to see the Grand, um, to see SPISpot and what's happening at The Wright Center, and Paragraphs. Oh, I just love to go downtown now and get a cup of coffee and go next door and read, and see all my friends at Paragraphs Bookstore. So, I wanna bring, I wanna help bring life back to Mount Vernon, because here for the past couple years there's been some, there's been things happen, and we wanna inspire people. Because addiction of any sort can just lead people into such depression and just feel like they have failed failed failed and they're done, no one cares about them, no one loves them, and we do, this

community does, we just have to get people to realize what initiatives and facilities are there. You know, recovery housing is a huge, huge huge passion of mine also, and trying to get recovery housing in this area, because we can treat someone, we can definitely get them treatment, and start healing their addiction, but we gotta phase them into how to get back into life. And, I was just gonna say, recovery housing is a huge missing link in this area.

MBW: So why do you think substance abuse is such a problem in this community?

DC: That's a, my opinion, oh, it's hard, um, I think it's cyclical. We're seeing families recycle it, so children are growing up in that environment and they're seeing, oh it's ok if Mom and Dad do it, so we're seeing that cycle. We're seeing it come, you know, I work in the medical community and we're seeing how, as medical professionals, how we can kind of unintentionally get someone addicted to something, you know, that's a huge, can be a huge contributing factor, and also just, um, people who think they're down and out, maybe they've lost their job, they've been laid off, it's so easy right now, and I'm amazed at how easy it is right now, to have illicit drugs just anywhere in this community. It is shocking to me, it's pretty darn easy to get it on the streets anymore, in little old Mount Vernon, it is incredibly easy. It's cheap, it's easy. And I think if we empower these, our community neighbors that might think that they're down and out and they don't have any place to go to, if we just love them and show them that we can help them kind of straighten their ways, we might be able to make some advances.

MBW: Do you remember substance abuse being a part of this community when you were younger or is that a more recent thing?

DC: I don't, right exactly, and that's what we talk about for so long, I don't. Back growing up in high school, you know, alcohol was the big thing, maybe marijuana, not really. But now marijuana's that entry drug, ehh, some people that's a fifty-fifty story, but no, to answer your question, really it wasn't. It wasn't.

CRO: Jordan, I don't know if you want to ask some questions?

Jordan Guy-Mozenter: Oh yeah, well I was just wanting to, you were talking earlier about how you wanna make sure that people can see this community in all its beauty and, now I'm just curious how you think about, do you have a sense of what people's perception of Knox County is, of what Mount Vernon is, who are thinking of moving in? Compared to someone like yourself, who has been in this community all her life.

DC: Right, so, I have a perfect story to tell you about that. A couple years ago I had a friend, she's now a dear friend, that moved into the community because she was looking for a job, and, um, she was actually looking for a job at KCH, they were interviewing her, and they took her

around and showed her all the things. And I actually met her through a mutual friend at a wine club that I'm in (Laughter) And she was there and we talked and she was telling me, you know, she's probably gonna start working for KCH and they showed her places and drove her around and she's like, "It's beautiful here, it's so cool, it's so small and quaint," and she's like, "Where are you from?" And I was like, "Oh, I've been born and raised here, yeah, I'm pretty biased, I kinda think that, I moved back, you know," so I said, "It's pretty cool to think that you liked it here." And she also had, I believe she had couple family members, maybe like a great aunt or uncle, who actually lived here, and so that kind of tied her to the area. And so then her husband came, because he was at another location, and so he's thus moved to the area and works for KCH and they thought the same thing, like this place, it's so—they both lived in, um, larger places, larger cities, I think, than Mount Vernon, went to school in big cities, went to college in big cities and, um, found their way here and they love it here. They love the small, the close-knit community. And they always tease my husband and I because they say, "Wherever we go someone always knows you. You're either related to someone, or someone knows you." And so that's our, that's our inside joke. Um, what do people think about our community? I don't, I don't know. Just from that story I think, you know, they think it's, how beautiful, how wonderful, how inviting, how small, how quaint, and they love to see how things are molding and growing. But to tie up that story, they've now planted themselves here, you know, so they're growing a family here, and they love it here. And that's been, that's been cool to see. I hope other people will continue to see that, um, I hope we can get people who are employed in this area to live in this area, cause I think there's a lot of people that commute, yeah.

MBW: So how do you think you could get people to sort of be more rooted here rather than commute to Columbus?

DC: So, my way of doing it (Laughter) I just talk it up, you know, I flat out say, "Why don't you live here? What's wrong with this place? C'mon there's this house for sale, there's this house for sale, c'mon." I don't, oh, wow, your question was what would I do? To entice people? I literally talk it up, I do, or I talk about our experience, Kevin and I's experiences here, what's cool about it, how it's been fun to have our kids grow up here. And then the other neat thing is how we have reconnected with people that we knew of, that we went to school with-is, you know, they might be years younger than us, but now we've reconnected with them, cause they've moved back, and they have kids. And so that's been incredibly fun. Um, how we, I think as a community we're on the right track. What's happening, you know, restimulating the area, we are on the right track. Doing community building objectives, like the Knox Substance Abuse Action Team.

CRO: Or the Facebook that you did for...

DC: Or Facebook, like for the school levee, yes. We're, we're getting on the right track. One of the big advertising initiatives that we did for the business a number of years ago were billboards,

you know, we have billboards all over the county with our faces on it. And so my face was on a billboard for so long, with my dad, so my dad and I did a billboard together, and people would identify you. And then it dawned on me that, my face is on a billboard, in a couple places, I have got to, you know cause sometimes I get really frustrated, like if I'm in the grocery store, thinking you know, I have got to control my temper because this face is on lots of billboards, and I own a business (Laughter) Or, if my husband gets frustrated in the car, or if I get frustrated in the car, and we might honk at someone, "I'm like, no no no, don't honk! I'm on a billboard!" (Laughter) That's a total side note but...

CRO: Are the pharmacies connected? Is there a family business? Can you speak a little bit about the family business?

DC: Yes, so, the family that started (knocks microphone) Oh no! I'm so sorry. The family that started Foster's Pharmacy was Dale Foster and his wife Edith Foster and they were, they lived in Knox County, Mount Vernon, for a long time, they have a daughter who still lives in Knox County, or Mount Vernon, and their son-in-law. Now Dale and Edith have since passed away. And Dale created the one pharmacy, it used to be on the square, and then he had a business partner that then bought the business from him, and what happens is the pharmacies just get handed down—not handed down, I mean there's financial contracts that happen, but they move or progress into the next staff pharmacists. And so that's where, you know, we have all been hired as staff pharmacists, whether it was, you know, Dale is our leader, and when he retired then it went to Mr. Campbell, and don't put this in video that I can't remember his first name...ok, anyway, so then it just kinda gets, it rolls through the staff, you know, if you're willing and wanna become owner, you know, then there's the progression. So, like I said, you know, we have had Dale and Edith's daughter do advertising with us because they're prominent people in our community also, and so she always enjoys being involved, because if that wasn't established I wouldn't be here, I wouldn't have the opportunity that I have right now. Who knows where I'd be—I might be in a big city. I doubt it, but (Laughter)

MBW: So you've talked a lot about community, sort of, involvement, do you think that this community is like a unified community or do you think there are like many communities within it?

DC: Oh, I wanna think it's unified. And I think for a large majority of it it is, it really is. Um, I try to think about a division or a divided community, and I really don't think there is, you know, honestly. So, I think the one thing that's different about this community is the cultural aspect, you know. When we think about it it is growing in cultural diversity and that's what's cool. That didn't happen much when I was a youngster, you know. And so, I'm hoping that that keeps growing, and that then allows continued unification. I really don't, I can't think really of a division, and that's what's awesome. Because when I think about that I think about, who are my

husband and I friends with? We have friends from all ages, you know, much older than us, much younger than us, there's a lot of unification. Now there are personal opinions and things that can divide that but I don't think there's, you know, big divisions that I can really think of. I mean you living, did you live in Gambier for twenty-five years?

CRO: No, I lived in Columbus because my husband commuted south,

DC: Gotcha, yeah.

CRO: And I commuted north, but when it was time, we're both foreigners, when we talked about retirement—he's from Costa Rica, I thought he was gonna say we're gonna go back to Costa Rica. I'm from Puerto Rico, I would love to go to Puerto Rico. And he said, you know, I think that the right place for us to retire is Gambier.

DC: (gasp) What!?

CRO: Yeah, and we chose to retire here—he is retired now so we have a house off Depolo Road.

DC: Oh, ok.

CRO: In the farm also, and it's so much fun.

DC: It is, it is, I know, I hear you.

CRO: I know that this is not my interview (Laughter)

DC: No, I know, but I agree with you, exactly, like there are unique things about A) where we live and B) what we do, that makes it so fun. You know, what is so funny, and it is funny to me, but it's not, is when Kenyon, if there's a Kenyon student ever, like this happens a lot of times, Friday night they're sick, their doctor calls in a prescription. Well we deliver one time a day to Kenyon and that's, like, in between three and four o'clock. And I'll get a prescription late at night, before we close, and then I'll call the student, you know, "Oh, I got this prescription," you know, and they're like, "Uh, I don't have a car, I don't know how I'm gonna come to you." And I'm like, "That's ok, I live in Gambier, I'm gonna go right through Gambier, so how bout we meet at Peirce Hall? Or how bout we meet in front of the post office?" And they are flabbergasted, they're like "What?" They're flabbergasted! Or the parents are, you know, then I have Mom and Dad calling and freaking and, "How are they gonna get their medicine? I'll take care of it, everything is fine. Your child is in good hands, I'll get them their medicine." And so when I pull up, I'm like, "I drive a silver car, I'll see ya in five minutes," so I pull up and they're like, "Oh my gosh, thank you." And I'm like, it amazes me that they've come from a community

or something where that is completely unheard of. And I'm like, "Oh, I'm just gonna go over to the VI and meet my family for dinner and drinks (laughter) or, I'm just gonna go home, it's all good." So, I love being able to do things like that. And you don't get that experience most anywhere.

MBW: Do you have any closing thoughts for us?

DC: What you guys are doing is great, I hope I didn't talk your ear off, but closing thoughts, um, you know, my husband and I are always asking our children about what do they want to do, you know. Yeah, they're twelve and nine but we kinda feel like they need to start thinking about things like that. My son would love to just play video games the rest of his life, but we tell them you've gotta think about a profession, or what you want to do with the rest of your life and where you see yourself living. So start, and so we tell them, start thinking about, you know, whether you like living in the country, or whether you would prefer to live in a Columbus, or a New Albany, and you can have a lot of things at your fingertips, whereas you know, now when we live in Mount Vernon if we have to get something that's out of town it's, it's methodical, it has to be planned, it's an hour there, it's an hour back, or wherever. What's important to you? Is it creating those tight-knit friendships, being able to be a contributing factor in your community, and being able to carry on what built you? And so, I think a lot of times maybe they take some things for granted, and we allow them to do that. Just because when I think back to growing up with Kenyon in my backyard, ehh, I had no idea about all of the people who are now famous who got their roots from Kenyon. It's phenomenal. So, we're kind of creating something for Andrew and Ella to just start to evaluate, start to think about. I hope more people get involved in community initiatives in this community, cause it's so rewarding. Yeah it's, it's time consuming, and it's frustrating at some points, and it kinda makes you angry to see where things are going, but the end result's gonna be really really rewarding, so, hopefully you all find yourselves in a position where you get involved in volunteerism and self-rewarded, yeah.

MBW: Yeah. Great! Thank you so much for talking to us!

DC: Yeah!

CRO: It was phenomenal.

DC: No problem.